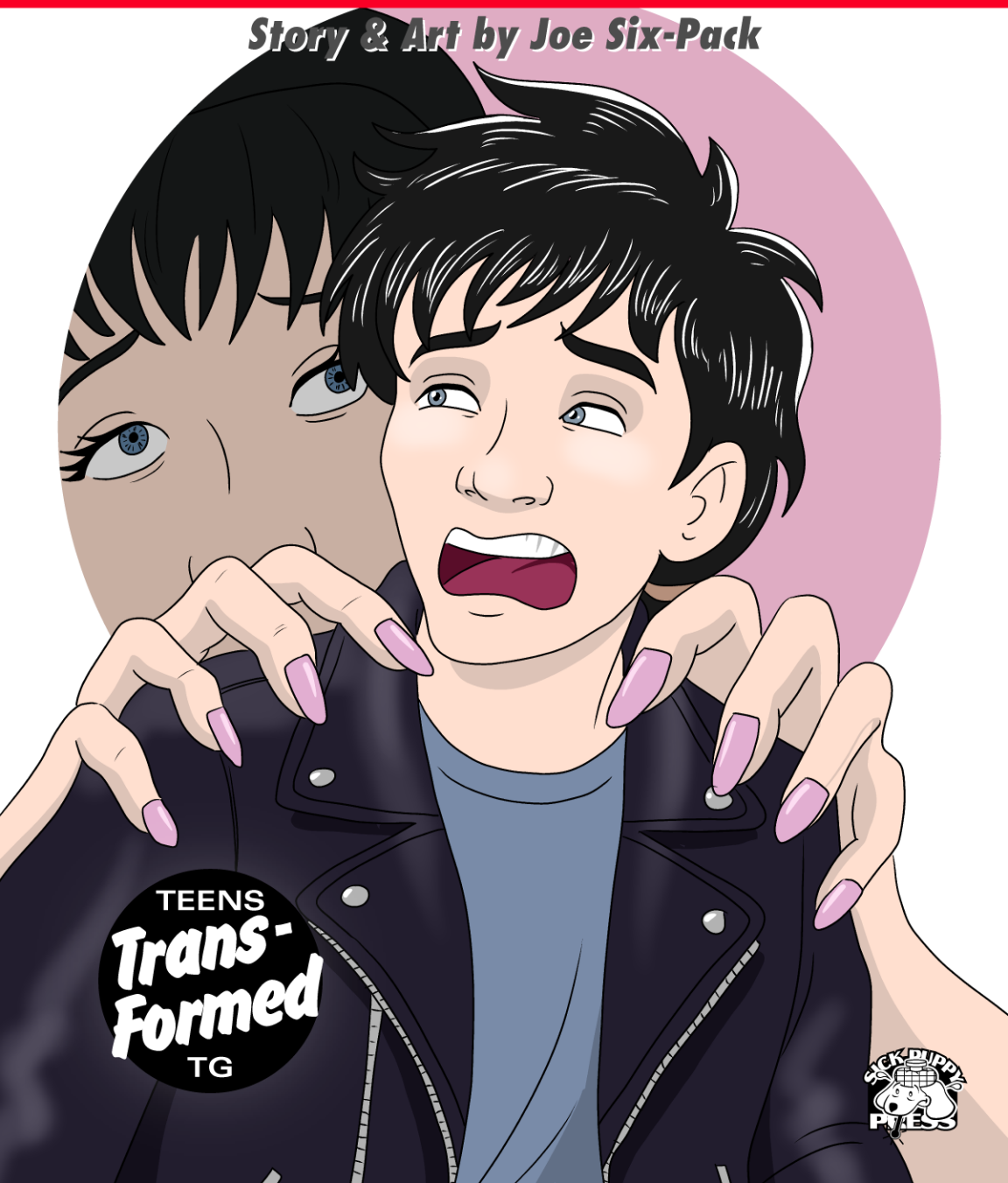


ADULTS ONLY

80 pages **20** illustrations

WHY CAN'T YOU BE MORE LIKE YOUR SISTER

Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack



J O E S I X P A C K

**WHY CAN'T
YOU BE MORE
LIKE YOUR
SISTER**

Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack
A Teens Transformed story



2025 Edition

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Story & Illustrations © 2025 Joe Six-Pack

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WHY CAN'T YOU BE MORE LIKE YOUR SISTER?

Drake Maddox crouched behind a rusty sedan, holding a stolen alternator. The parking lot light barely reached him. The shadows looked surreal as the wind rattled the chain-link fence. He could hear traffic from the highway and the sound of litter blowing across the pavement. His car sat nearby with the hood open, showing an engine that looked beyond repair. Hoses were cracked, belts looked worn out, and the radiator had given up.

He looked at the alternator in his hand. "Should've been mine to begin with," he said. "Like I'm supposed to pay for this junk." He shoved the alternator into his backpack, the zipper caught. He forced it closed and stood up, rolling his shoulders. He'd install it here, but he was worried that there was a camera somewhere that might catch him in the act. He watched the darkened auto parts store, making sure nothing had changed, with no indication he had broken in. The doors reflected the weak light of the 'Closed' sign inside.

He stood there a moment and let himself think the whole thing had been easy. He got in, grabbed what he needed, and got out. There was no alarm, no one chasing him. The store was quiet, and he was sure he would get away with it. He closed the hood of his car.

Then he heard a car door slam, clear and sharp in the quiet. He froze.

A beam of light sliced across the lot, swinging toward him.

"Hey! You there!" a sharp and commanding voice said loudly.

Drake turned slowly, muscles tensing, ready to bolt. Two police officers stood near their patrol car, flashlights trained on him. One had his hand resting on his holster, the other took a step forward.

"Don't move," the lead officer ordered, tersely.

Drake lifted his hands slightly, palms out, not quite surrendering but not looking for immediate trouble either. His chest tightened.

"Just working on my car," he said, keeping his voice even.

The second officer, a stocky guy with a thick mustache, nodded toward Drake's backpack. "What's in the bag?"

Drake hesitated. "Tools."

The first officer, taller, leaner, took another step forward, his flashlight bouncing off the dull metal of Drake's car. His eyes narrowed. "Pop the bag open."

Drake exhaled sharply, dragging his feet as he swung the backpack off his shoulder. He knew stalling wouldn't do him much good, but instincts kicked in anyway. He fumbled with the zipper, cursing when it snagged again.

The second officer shifted his stance, impatient. "Let's go."

With one final tug, the zipper gave way. The top flopped open, exposing the alternator nestled against a pile of wrenches and greasy rags.

The first officer let out a slow breath. "Auto parts store closed hours ago. Want to explain how you got your hands on that?"

Drake forced a smirk. "Found it."

The mustached officer barked a humorless laugh. "Yeah? Where?"

Drake shrugged. "Dumpster."

The taller officer exchanged a look with his partner. "That so?"

Drake let his gaze drift toward the street. The patrol car was angled toward the exit. If he ran, he had a solid five-second head start — maybe six if they were slow on the draw. But that was a big if.

"Why don't you step away from the car," the first officer said.

Drake didn't budge, calculating his next move.

The second officer took a half-step closer. "Kid, don't make this harder than it needs to be."

Drake swallowed. His jaw tensed. The weight of the stolen part in his bag felt heavier by the second. The moment Drake's muscles coiled, the officers knew.

He bolted.

The young tough dropped the backpack and ran as fast as he could. Boots scuffed against the pavement, slipping slightly on loose gravel. Years of avoiding PE were now catching up with him, but he was still fast enough to beat some fat cops.

"Stop right there!" one of the officers shouted, but Drake didn't.

The lot wasn't big, but it felt like a mile. The shadows were deep, the flickering streetlamp barely holding back the darkness. His car was too far — he'd never make it. But the alley? Maybe. If he could just...

A heavy force slammed into his back.



Drake hit the ground hard, cheek scraping against the asphalt. A grunt ripped from his throat as a knee pinned between his shoulder blades. The rough press of a hand gripped the back of his jacket, yanking him onto his side.

“Dumb move, kid,” the mustached officer growled. “Real dumb.”

Drake twisted, but the taller officer was already there, grabbing his arm and yanking it behind his back. Cold metal clamped around his wrist.

“Let me go, man!” Drake snapped, kicking out, but the taller officer pressed down on his leg, stopping him cold.

“Keep fighting, we’ll add resisting,” the officer warned, his voice calm but edged with irritation.

Drake breathed hard through his nose, chest heaving as the handcuffs clicked shut around his wrists. A second later, they hauled him up to his feet, none too gently.

The squad car’s lights strobed against the storefront, painting everything in flashes of red and blue. The hum of the engine filled the empty parking lot, an unwanted soundtrack to the scene.

A man stood at the entrance of the store, arms crossed over his chest, a phone clutched in one hand. His face was tight with barely restrained anger, deep lines carving into his weathered skin. The fluorescent lights from inside cast a sharp glow over him, making his glare all the more piercing.

“That him?” the taller officer asked, keeping a firm grip on Drake’s arm.

“Damn right it’s him.” The store owner jabbed a finger toward Drake. “Caught him on the cameras. Been sneaking around here for days.”

Drake huffed, rolling his shoulders as much as the cuffs would allow. “It’s just one stupid part,” he muttered. “Don’t act like it’s a big deal.”

The store owner’s nostrils flared. “One part?” His grip on the phone tightened. “You think I run a charity? You’ve been casing my store, punk. Bet this ain’t the first time.”

The mustached officer sighed, shaking his head. “Figures.”

Drake scoffed, shifting his weight, the cuffs digging into his wrists. His face was blank, but the irritation in his posture was clear.

The taller officer nudged him toward the squad car. “Time to take a ride.”

Drake shook and squirmed, trying to get free. He was a little too young to understand that this was just going to result in more pain. He understood that a little bit better when he got slammed into the side of the patrol car. “Watch your head,” the cop said.

The back door of the cruiser opened, the interior dark, the faint scent of old leather and sweat wafting out. He slid in, the seat slick under him. The door slammed shut with a finality that sent a ripple of silence through Drake's body.

Outside, the officers spoke in low voices with the store owner. Drake didn't care what they were saying. He leaned back against the seat, tilting his head to the side, staring out the window as the red and blue lights pulsed against the storefront.

His reflection stared back at him, mouth set in a bored line, expression unreadable. He hated getting arrested.



The air in the holding cell was thick with stale sweat and bad decisions. Mostly the sweat, though. The overhead fluorescent light buzzed, flickering every few seconds like it was as tired of this place as the people inside. *Hadn't they heard of LEDs?* Drake wondered. The concrete bench was cold against Drake's back, but he didn't move. His boots — scuffed, the soles worn almost smooth — were propped up against the edge, his arms folded across his chest.

A guy across from him — mid-thirties, scruffy, reeking of cheap liquor — glanced his way but looked down just as quick. Another detainee, a kid barely older than him, sat hunched in the far corner, arms wrapped around his knees. Drake ignored them.

The place was dead quiet except for the occasional murmur of voices from the hallway beyond the bars. Phones ringing. Officers talking. The occasional bark of a radio. The whole place had a slow, grinding machine that appeared to chew people up and spit them out.

Drake shifted, exhaling through his nose. "I gotta be out soon," he muttered, voice low. His fingers tapped against his jacket sleeve, leather creaking. "Ain't like I killed somebody."

A snort came from the guy across the way, but he didn't say anything. Drake smirked.

Footsteps echoed down the hall — heavy, deliberate. A second later, an officer leaned against the bars, arms crossed. His uniform was crisp, badge dull under the dim light. His eyes scanned the cell before settling on Drake.

"Your mom's on her way, kid," the officer said, voice dry, bored. Then, with a smirk: "Bet she's thrilled."

Drake didn't move, didn't even blink.

"Yeah?" He tilted his head slightly, a slow, lazy grin curling at the edges of his mouth. "Well, she should be used to it by now."

The officer let out a short laugh, shaking his head.

"You think this is funny?"

Drake shrugged, the leather of his jacket shifting with the movement.

"It's fucking *hilarious*."

The officer studied him for a moment, eyes sharp, searching.

"You keep playing this game, Maddox, and one day, it won't be a holding cell," he said, tapping a finger against the bars. "It'll be the real thing. Then we'll see how funny you think it is."

Drake's smirk didn't fade. He just leaned his head back against the wall, boots still propped up, eyes half-lidded like he could fall asleep right there.

The officer exhaled, long and slow. Then he pushed off the bars, shaking his head as he walked off.

Drake stayed where he was, unmoving. The light above flickered again, buzzing like an angry wasp.



Susan Maddox walked with sure, deliberate steps. She knew exactly where to go. She had been here before. Her tailored blazer, crisp blouse, and neatly pressed skirt screamed professionalism, but the tightness in her jaw betrayed the barely contained fury beneath the polished surface. Her hair, normally smoothed into perfection, was the slightest bit ragged, a sign of a night already pushed beyond its limits.

She stopped at the front desk, her manicured fingers gripping the strap of her handbag like it was the only thing keeping her tethered.

"Where is he?" Her voice was soft, even, but laced with something cold.

The officer at the desk barely glanced up before nodding toward the back. "Holding cell." He tapped a clipboard. "Good news is, store owner's not pressing charges. Said it wasn't worth the paperwork."

Susan exhaled sharply, her nails digging into the strap.

"Lucky him," she muttered. "You need to take my bag, right? It's best I don't have anything to throw at him."



She followed the officer down the hall, past rows of desks cluttered with coffee cups. The officer stopped at a set of thick metal bars and gestured inside.

"Please don't raise your voice," he said under his breath, before stepping aside.

Drake was exactly where she expected him — slouched against the concrete wall, legs stretched out, arms crossed over his chest. His leather jacket was still on, his expression unreadable except for the slight smirk tugging at his mouth.

The light above flickered again, buzzing like it was sick of the scene playing out beneath it.

Susan didn't speak right away. She just stood there, one hand resting on her hip, the other ready to point as she shouted.

Drake's smirk widened. "Hey, Mom."

Susan's lips pressed into a thin line. She looked him over, taking in the scuffed boots, the lazy slouch, the defiant glint in his eye.

"You're a real disappointment, you know that?" she said loudly, as she pointed.

Drake's smirk didn't fade. If anything, it deepened.

"Since when have I worried about impressing you?"

The words hung between them like a blade.

Susan inhaled sharply, then turned to the officer. "What do I need to sign?"

"Paperwork's at the front desk. He's free to go."

"Of course he is," she muttered. "A night or two in jail might teach him a lesson." She turned back to Drake, her eyes hard. "Get up."

Drake didn't move right away. He stretched, slow and deliberate, before standing. He rolled his shoulders like he had all the time in the world, then sauntered toward the cell door. The officer unlocked it with a sharp clang.

She turned sharply on her heel. "Let's go." Drake followed, his boots echoing against the tile.



The front door slammed behind them, shaking the picture frames on the wall. The house was dim, the only light spilling from the kitchen, casting long shadows over the living room.

Susan didn't even take off her coat. She paced the small space between the couch and the coffee table, her hands cutting through the air as she spoke.

"You've been stealing, lying, skipping school... Getting arrested! — you think I'm going to tolerate this behavior?" Her voice, usually measured, sharp with restraint, cracked with frustration.

Drake shrugged off his leather jacket and tossed it onto the couch like he hadn't just spent six hours in a holding cell. He kicked off his boots with a lazy thud, rolling his shoulders before slouching against the armrest.

"It's not like I hurt anyone," he muttered, arms crossing over his chest. "You know how much that old man wanted for a manifold gasket? He can afford it."

Susan stopped mid-step, turning to face him fully. Her expression tightened, her fists clenching at her sides.

"That's your excuse?" she snapped. "That someone can afford to lose what you steal?"

Drake scoffed, shaking his head. "You act like I robbed a bank or something."

Susan exhaled sharply, running a hand through her hair, then let it drop. She gestured toward him, her fingers trembling slightly.

"This — this right here," she said, voice low, edged with something heavier than anger. "This is why I don't believe you'll change."

Drake rolled his eyes, sinking further into the couch.

"You think this is a joke," Susan pressed, stepping closer. "You think getting dragged into a police station in cuffs, sitting in a holding cell..." She cut herself off, shaking her head. "You are throwing your life away."

Drake looked up at her, his smirk lazy, indifferent. "Hey, you raised me."

Susan's nerves snapped. For a moment, she just stared at him, her expression unreadable. Then she let out a bitter laugh, short and humorless.

"Your *father* raised you," she said. "And he's not here to protect you anymore."

The house was quiet except for the hum of the refrigerator and the faint ticking of the wall clock. The argument had died down for a moment, but the air still crackled with the remnants of anger. The dim glow from the kitchen light barely reached the living room, casting jagged shadows across the floor.

Susan stood near the fireplace, arms crossed, fingers gripping her sleeves as though restraining herself from lashing out again. Her face was tight, her breath measured. Drake remained slouched on the couch, one leg stretched out, the other bent at the knee. His fingers drummed restlessly against his thigh, his jaw clenched as he stared at the ceiling.



Then, Susan let out a sharp breath, her patience snapping like brittle glass.

“Why can’t you be more like your sister?”

Drake’s fingers froze mid-tap. His entire body stiffened, but Susan didn’t stop.

“She’s responsible, respectful, and actually cares about her future!”

Drake sat up straighter, his eyes narrowing as Susan strode to the mantle. She picked up a framed photo, turning it toward him.

“Look at her,” Susan said, her voice laced with something dangerously close to bitterness. The photograph caught the dim light — Rebecca Anne, beaming in her perfectly pressed clothes, smiling like an idiot. “She’s everything you’re not.”

“Oh, here we go again,” he said, his voice cold, but beneath it, something burned. “Perfect Rebecca Anne, the golden child. Always following orders like a damn robot.”

Susan’s eyes flashed.

“Maybe if I was as boring as her,” Drake continued, his voice rising, “you’d actually leave me alone.”

Susan’s grip on the frame tightened.

Drake pushed himself off the couch, stepping forward. “You think I like being compared to her all the time?” His voice cracked with something raw, something barely held together. “She’s not some saint, Mom. You just don’t see it because she’s never here!”

Susan’s head snapped up, her face pale but her eyes dark with fury.

“You’re right,” she said, her voice icy. “She’s never here because she’s working hard, making something of herself. Unlike you, who can’t even stay out of trouble for five minutes!”

Drake took another step forward, his breath sharp.

Susan’s grip on the photo frame trembled, and for a moment, it seemed like she might hurl it to the ground.

Then she did something worse.

“You’re no good,” she whispered. “And you always will be.”

Drake stared at her, his breath shallow. His fingers twitched at his sides like they wanted to curl into fists but couldn’t quite manage it. His jaw clenched so hard it ached. The weight of her words had broken his cockiness for a moment.

Susan let out a slow breath, pressing her fingers against her temples. The moment stretched on and on.

Then, finally, she straightened, smoothing out the front of her blouse like she could erase everything that had just been said. She inhaled deeply, visibly trying to steady herself.

"I'm done, Drake," she said, her voice flat. "Done letting you run wild. Things are going to change around here."

Drake let out a sharp, humorless laugh.

"What, you gonna ground me?" His eyes were dark, unreadable. "Like that's gonna do anything."

Susan shook her head.

"No," she said quietly. "Grounding isn't enough."

She set Rebecca Anne's photo back onto the mantle with a deliberate motion.

"Starting tomorrow, I'm making some real changes."



The metal clink of the padlock snapping shut echoed down the hallway.

Drake stood barefoot on the cold hardwood floor, arms crossed over his bare chest, a towel slung low around his waist. Droplets of water clung to his skin, still fresh from the shower. He stared at the door to his room, now secured with a thick brass padlock, disbelief flickering across his face.

"You're not serious," he said, his voice edged with irritation.

Susan stood firm, the key clutched tightly in her hand. She didn't look away, didn't hesitate. Her blazer was crisp, her hair neatly pulled back, the image of someone who had already been awake for hours, setting things in motion.

"Oh, I'm completely serious," she said, her voice calm but sharp. "You want to act like a delinquent? Fine. But you're not going to do it from that thing you call a room, surrounded by trash and half-eaten food." She dropped the key into her pocket. "You don't deserve a place of your own. You're always planning trouble in there."

Drake let out a short laugh, shaking his head. He took a step forward, the floorboards creaking beneath him.

"This is insane," he said. "What am I supposed to do? Sleep in the garage?"

Susan's expression didn't waver. "The garage is locked tight."

Drake narrowed his eyes. "Why?"

"So you can't use your car."

His jaw tightened. His hands flexed at his sides. “What the fuck are you doing, Mom? Are you kicking me out?”

Susan took a step past him and pointed down the hall.

“You’re sleeping in your sister’s room.”

Drake turned his head slowly, looking down the hallway toward the door that had barely been touched in months. Rebecca Anne’s room. The pristine, untouchable shrine to perfection.

His breath came out slow, controlled. His fingers curled into fists. “Like hell.”

“Do what you want. Stand out here in the hall until you catch a cold and die.”

Drake stormed down the hall, his bare feet thudding against the hardwood. His towel was he had to cover himself, but he barely cared. His temper burned hotter than the steam still clinging to his skin from the shower. He shoved open the door to Rebecca Anne’s room and stopped dead in the doorway.

His face twisted in disgust. The room was a pastel nightmare. The walls were painted soft pink, the kind of shade that made his stomach turn. White lace curtains framed the windows, filtering the morning light into an almost ethereal glow. A frilly bedspread, adorned with tiny embroidered flowers, covered the perfectly made bed.

Then came the ribbons. They were everywhere. On the bedposts, tied neatly around the vanity chair, hanging in tidy little bows from the closet handles. A row of stuffed animals sat against the pillows, their glassy eyes staring straight at him, like they knew he didn’t belong here.

Drake groaned, dragging a hand down his face.

“You can’t be serious.” His voice dripped with disbelief as he turned to face Susan, who stood just behind him, arms crossed, expression unyielding. “This isn’t a bedroom; it’s a creepy dollhouse.”

Susan didn’t flinch. “Maybe the change of scenery will calm you down,” she said coolly. “God knows your room hasn’t done any good.”

Drake scoffed, stepping further inside, his shoulders tensed like the walls themselves were closing in on him. He turned in a slow circle, eyes scanning every inch of the overly perfect space. His gaze landed on the white vanity in the corner, complete with an ornate mirror and an array of neatly organized makeup, brushes, and perfume bottles.

His lip curled.

“This is a joke,” he muttered under his breath.

Susan took a step forward. “And don’t you dare break anything of your sister’s,” she warned, her tone sharp as steel.

Drake let out a sour laugh, shaking his head as he turned back to her.

“Right,” he said, voice dripping with sarcasm. “Wouldn’t want to disturb the sacred shrine of Saint Rebecca Anne Maddox.”

The sound of Susan’s heels clicking against the hardwood faded down the hall. A moment later, the front door shut with a decisive thud. Drake stood frozen for a beat, jaw clenched, fists still curled at his sides. His entire body hummed with frustration, tension coiled tight in his shoulders.

He headed back to his locked door, and shook the handle. The tugged on the lock. He threw himself at the door. He could, he thought to himself, just grab a hammer or a table or something and ram it through the door, but that was just going to wind up with him getting thrown out of the house. For now, he was going to have to let his mother think she won, before he wore her down and let him have his room back. He would be in his own bed by six tonight, he figured.

He returned to his sister’s room, cringing as he walked inside a room that seemed designed to scare away men in the first place. Then, with a sharp exhale, he turned toward Rebecca Anne’s closet.

“This is complete bullshit,” he muttered under his breath, running a hand through his damp hair.

The pristine white doors of the wardrobe loomed in front of him, untouched, spotless — just like everything else in this sickly sweet shrine to perfection. He grabbed one of the knobs and yanked the door open.

A row of pastel blouses, dresses, and skirts hung neatly in front of him, organized by color like a damn department store. Soft pinks faded into lavenders, then powder blues. He squinted at the ridiculous coordination, his scowl deepening.

“God, she’s such a perfect little princess,” he muttered, rifling through the hangers.

His fingers pushed through silk and lace, each item more unbearable than the last. Dresses with tiny embroidered flowers. Skirts with delicate bows. Sweaters so soft they felt like they’d disintegrate if he even looked at them too hard.

Drake gritted his teeth and dug deeper, desperate for anything remotely neutral.

Behind a section of pristine blouses, his hand finally landed on something different. He pulled it forward — jeans. Plain, blue denim. A flicker of relief

passed through him — until he noticed the delicate floral embroidery along the pockets.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” he muttered, staring at the tiny stitched flowers with disdain.

Still, they were better than a dress. With a heavy sigh, he yanked the jeans off the hanger and threw them onto the bed.

Next, he needed a shirt.

Drake turned back to the closet, eyes scanning the rows of perfectly folded sweaters stacked on the shelves. Most of them were pink, lavender, or baby blue — no chance in hell. He pulled open the bottom drawer, rummaging through the neatly arranged tops.

Finally, he found a white T-shirt. Simple. Plain.

Then he turned it over, seeing a lace trim decorated the neckline, delicate and frilly.

Drake groaned, squeezing his eyes shut for a second. “This is the best I’m gonna get,” he grumbled, yanking the shirt from the drawer. He tossed it onto the bed with the jeans, then ran a hand over his face.

Drake yanked the white T-shirt over his head, grimacing as the lace trim brushed against his collarbone. He grabbed the hem and stretched it downward, trying to rip the delicate frill away, but it was sewn too well.

“Fuck it,” he muttered.

The fabric clung to his frame in a way his usual loose shirts never did, and it made his skin crawl. He reached for the jeans next, stepping into them and tugging them up. The denim was snug — too snug. His usual jeans hung low and loose, but these clung to his legs, the stiff fabric limiting his movement.

Drake caught his reflection in the vanity mirror across the room and scowled. The floral embroidery along the pockets stood out like a neon sign. The lace trim on the shirt only made it worse.

“I look ridiculous,” he muttered, running a hand through his messy hair.

It wasn’t just the outfit. It was the room. The walls, the ribbons, the sickly-sweet scent of Rebecca Anne’s perfume lingering in the air. The whole place felt like it was closing in on him, suffocating him with its pink femininity.

With a sigh, he crouched down and rummaged through the bottom of the closet, looking for shoes. His own sneakers and boots were locked away with the rest of his stuff, so he had no choice but to grab a pair of Rebecca Anne’s running shoes. They were plain white — thank God for small favors.

He slid them on, ignoring how much softer they felt than his usual shoes.

Drake sat on the floral-patterned bedspread, bouncing his knee as he checked the clock on the wall. Still an hour before school. Too much time to think.

He drummed his fingers against his knee. This was not his room. It was never supposed to be for anyone else but his sister, someone who color-coded her life and somehow made vanilla a personality trait. Rebecca Anne was out there, somewhere, making straight A's and probably saving kittens, while he was stuck here among pink ribbons and lace, the only things in this house more allergic to him than the cat.

He looked at the desk in the corner, the white one he wasn't supposed to touch. For years, he was told, "That's your sister's," like it was sacred, like she kept state secrets in there. He stood up, crossing the floor that was definitely too clean, and set his hand on the surface. Not a speck of dust, which seemed to confirm that, in this house, only dust was less welcome than he was.

He muttered, "Might as well see what perfect Rebecca Anne is hiding in here." The drawer stuck a little, which almost made him respect her less, but then it slid open and he got a face full of vanilla. Of course her drawers smelled good. He didn't even know that was possible.

Inside, it looked like the office supply aisle at the drugstore. Notebooks, all labeled. Notebooks for "Chemistry," for "Reflections," for "French." The pens were lined up by color, and not even in rainbow order, but in this bizarre pattern that probably meant something to her and no one else. There was a silver locket, which seemed like the kind of thing you'd find on a greeting card, and a ceramic cat that looked smug as if it knew how Drake felt right now.

He pushed things around with his index finger, mostly out of boredom, until he found something hard wedged in the back. He pulled it out. It was a laminated high school ID card. That's not unusual unless you knew Rebecca Anne. She'd been shipped off to some boarding school in Europe, the kind of place with uniforms and fountains and not a single Drake. He'd suspected his mother did it to keep him from a "bad influence" on Rebecca Anne.

He squinted at the card, holding it under the lamp. There was her name, Rebecca Anne Maddox, her photo, smiling the way she smiled for every camera, and her student ID number. Under that, in all caps, was the name of his school. The school where he went. The place she wasn't supposed to be.

He said, "What the hell?" quietly, which sounded a lot less dramatic than he felt. He turned the card over, as if the answer might be hiding on the back. No such luck. All he got was his sister's flawless smile beaming up at him, like she

knew something he didn't. He held the card tighter, the plastic bending in his hand.

She was supposed to be far away, giggling over tea parties with her private school friends. So what was this for? He put the card down, let out a breath, and wondered what kind of surprise this was supposed to be. More secrets kept by his mother.

When the doors downstairs opened and shut again, indicating his mother was home, Drake was ready to get on her case. He stormed down the stairs, the wooden steps creaking under his weight. The ID card burned in his grip, the laminated plastic digging into his palm. His heart pounded, frustration mounting with every step. The too-tight jeans and lace-trimmed shirt only fueled his irritation, making him feel ridiculous, like a joke in his own home.

Susan was in the living room, undoing her scarf as she heard her son stomp into the room.

"What's this?" he demanded, his voice sharp, almost accusing. He held the card right in her face.

Susan barely glanced up, raising an eyebrow. "It's Rebecca Anne's school ID."

Drake's grip tightened. "Yeah, I can see that," he snapped. "But why does it have *my* school on it? I thought she was at that fancy boarding school."

Susan set herself down on the sofa, folding her hands neatly in her lap. She didn't look rattled, didn't even blink at his tone. "She's transferring," she said simply.

Drake stared at her, dumbfounded. His mind scrambled for an explanation, something that made sense. "What do you mean, she's transferring?" he asked, voice lower now, but still tense.

Susan exhaled, sitting up a little straighter. "She'll be attending public school later this year."

Drake scoffed, shaking his head. "Why the hell would she do that? You've spent years hiding her in that perfect little school so she wouldn't have to see..." He gestured vaguely. "...me."

Susan's expression didn't change. "It's closer," she said, her tone matter-of-fact. "And it'll give her more time to focus. Besides, I can't afford that school forever."

Drake took a step back, his mind reeling. His fingers tightened around the laminated ID as if squeezing it hard enough could change what he'd just heard.

"Wait... so she's coming home?" His voice was sharp, disbelieving. "Like... full-time?"

Susan met his gaze, her expression calm, unwavering. “Yes, Drake. She’ll be home year-round. Isn’t that nice?”

Drake let out a sharp, bitter laugh, shaking his head. He held up the ID card like it was evidence in a crime scene.

“Yeah, because that’s exactly what I need — more time with Miss Perfect.” He waved the card through the air in frustration. “The best thing about her is that she’s never here! She’s always off at her stupid school, winning trophies or whatever. I don’t need her hanging around here and making me look bad every day.”

Susan leaned back in her chair, crossing one leg over the other. She was completely unfazed by his outburst.

“Well,” she said, folding her hands in her lap, “maybe if you got your act together, you wouldn’t feel so threatened by her success.”

Drake’s breath came out sharp through his nose. His jaw tightened, a muscle twitching near his temple.

“I’m not threatened by her!” he snapped. His free hand clenched into a fist at his side. “I just don’t want her around, okay? She’s already your goody-goody favorite, and now I gotta deal with her all the time?”

Susan sighed, standing up. She reached for the ID, plucking it from his grip before he could protest.

“Rebecca Anne is part of this family, Drake,” she said, her tone steely. “It’s long past time you learned how to be a better person. She’s coming home, and you better get used to the idea.”

Drake’s shoulders twitched, his arms ready to throw a punch. His entire body tensed as Susan turned away, setting the ID card neatly on the coffee table. The air between them was charged, like a storm was just waiting to break.

Drake exhaled sharply, his voice low. “You’re not going to want her to come home while I’m here. I’ll make her life hell.”

Susan turned back to him, her gaze cool, her posture unwavering. “It’s already done.”

Drake let out another humorless laugh and ran a hand through his messy hair. His skin felt hot, his thoughts racing, crashing into each other like a car wreck.

“Great,” he muttered, voice dripping with sarcasm. “Just great.”

Susan didn’t flinch. She simply walked toward the kitchen, strolling away as if their conversation had already ended.

Drake stood there, his fists clenched, his breathing primal, as the weight of it all sank in. Rebecca Anne was coming home.



The school bell echoed through the hallways, sharp and piercing, signaling the start of another long, pointless day.

Drake swaggered in, his sister's jogging shoes scuffing against the linoleum floor. Each step felt foreign, unnatural, like his body rejected the clothes he'd been forced into. The too-snug white top clung to him in all the wrong places, the lace at the neckline a constant, irritating presence against his skin. And the jeans — tight, stiff, with those damn embroidered flowers on the pockets — felt like a personal insult every time he moved.

Still, he smirked, pretending he didn't notice the looks.

A few students shot him quick glances as he passed, some whispering, others outright snickering. He caught a guy nudging his friend, both of them stifling laughs behind their hands.

Drake rolled his shoulders, adjusting his backpack with a lazy, unimpressed shrug.

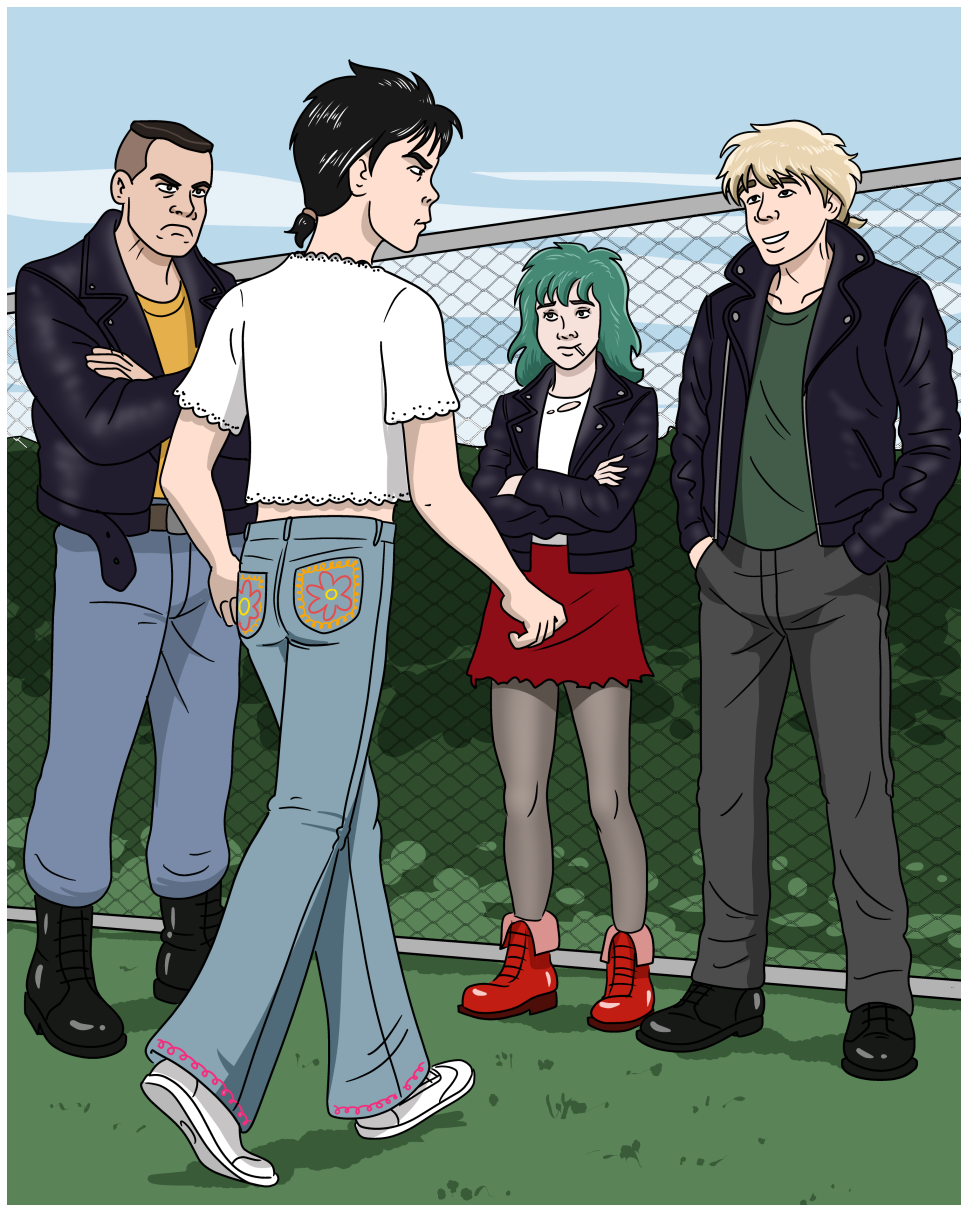
"Idiots," he muttered under his breath.

He could handle it. He'd been dealing with stares and judgment his whole life. This was nothing.

He strode through the hall, moving past rows of dull gray lockers, dodging clusters of students who barely acknowledged his existence. His pace didn't slow until he stepped out into the courtyard, where the usual crew had already gathered in their designated spot — far from the prying eyes of teachers, near the back fence where the school grounds met the overgrown lot next door.

Corey was the first to spot him. "Yo, Drake!" His voice carried across the courtyard, drawing attention from their group. He stood out as always — shaggy hair falling over his eyes, a grin that practically lived on his face. His leather jacket hung loose over a faded band tee, and a cigarette dangled from his fingers.

Next to him, Dylan leaned against the fence, arms crossed, while Rick flicked a lighter absently, the tiny flame dancing before disappearing. Jess, the only girl in their group, sat on the ground with her back against the fence, tying up the laces on her boots.



As soon as Corey took in Drake's outfit, his smirk widened. "What's with this shit?"

Drake rolled his eyes but couldn't help the grin tugging at the corner of his lips. "Man, you should've seen my mom's face last night," he said, dropping his backpack onto the ground. "She was *livid*."

"So she's making you march in the pride parade?" Dylan asked, gesturing to his outfit.